

Lawson,

Essay on the Influence of the War of
1812.

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Influence of the War of 1812

W. T. LAWSON.

ESSAY

ON THE

INFLUENCE OF THE WAR OF 1812

IN THE

CONSOLIDATION OF THE UNION.



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ESSAY.

VERY few of the present generation have any just conception of the great changes which were wrought in the nature and political character of the United States by the War of 1812. In fact, the history of that conflict, which made the American people a nation, is almost forgotten in the splendor of the more imposing events which, in peace and in war, have since then illustrated the progress of the republic to imperial greatness. Those who have been dazzled by the victories of the Mexican War and the great deeds of Grant and Lee and of Sherman and Stonewall Jackson can hardly discover the misty forms of the captains who seventy years ago led the American armies to victory after victory over the British and their savage allies; and Perry, and Hull, and Decatur, and Lawrence are forgotten in the achievements of Farragut. Yet it was the War of 1812 which made possible the conquests of Taylor and Scott, and gave to the Government that strength which upheld and preserved the Union and made Grant President of an unbroken republic. Though the War of 1812 was inconclusive in that the treaty of peace which terminated it did not formally establish the principles for the maintenance of which it had been waged by the United States; and though, to the superficial observer, it may seem to have been unhappily begun and ingloriously ended, it was, in fact, a most fortunate event, for it converted a Confederation of thirteen discordant States into a Union which is now the object of reverence and affection, and laid broad and deep the foundations of its prosperity and grandeur.

In simple truth, the Union which we know—that thorough and complete Union of all the States which to-day has almost effaced State lines and made the United States one great commonwealth, one republic, one nation—hardly existed except in theory and in the semblance of a government on the 18th of June, 1812, when war was declared against Great Britain.

To ascertain the truth of this statement there is need only to glance at the history of the Union, and the condition of the country from the end of the Revolutionary War to the beginning of Madison's administration in 1809—a period seemingly uneventful, and but little known and understood to-day.

When, having done this, we shall compare the Union of that day with that which existed in 1846, when the war with Mexico was begun, we can discern the great and beneficent organic changes which were wrought in the Union by the War of 1812, and also the unifying, consolidating, and nationalizing forces which were set in motion by that war, forces which have been constantly operating since then with increasing vitality and energy. It is to these forces, indeed, that we owe the war with Mexico, the immense acquisition of territory resulting from that war; above all, we discover in them that strength and power of the National Government, and that devotion of the people to the Union, which together triumphed over secession and made us what we are—a homogeneous and united people—

“Distinct as the waves; but one as the sea.”

Clearly recognizing the changes which were wrought in the political structure of the Union by the War of 1812, we shall try to ascertain how these changes were brought about and how the war produced them.

The treaty of peace by which Great Britain acknowledged its rebellious colonies to be free, sovereign, and independent was signed on the 3d of September, 1783. During the war the colonies had been held together under the Articles of Confederation, and by common dangers and necessities.

When, however, war—the vivifying and solidifying influence which gave strength to the Articles of Confederation—ceased, the colonies began to fall apart, and men could no longer say in the patriotic words of Patrick Henry, “The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian ; I am an American.”

Those distinctions not only existed, but they became broader and deeper every day, as the differences in the character, and pursuits, and interests of the inhabitants of the several colonies became more pronounced and antagonistic. The Congress—which was the Government, the only external symbol of the Union of the States, and the only depository of the powers conferred upon the General Government by the Articles of Confederation—was fast sinking into contempt. Its own members had become indifferent to their duties, and so remiss in their attendance upon its sessions that it was often impossible to get a quorum for the transaction of business.

Imbecility on the part of a government always and inevitably leads to the assumption of its functions by unauthorized individuals or associations; for, in all civilized societies there are duties to be discharged by some governing power, and if these duties be not discharged by those upon whom they are lawfully devolved they will be undertaken by others. This is exemplified in lynch law and vigilance committees, and in mining camps and other forms of provisional government.

The growing impotence and incapacity of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation encouraged the several States, and, indeed, associations of individuals in different States also, to usurp its unused powers, to perform its neglected duties, and to arrogate to themselves other powers—all of which were exercised for the advantage of the usurpers, and not for the common good of all the States.

The tendency and the immediate influence of these usurpations were to widen the breach between the States and to

hasten the complete disruption of the ties of sentiment and policy which had held them together during the struggle for independence.

Not only was the Confederation in process of rapid disintegration, but the States themselves began to disintegrate. The western counties of North Carolina separated themselves from the rest of that State, and proceeded to organize into a new State to which they gave the name of Frankland. Kentucky declared its independence of Virginia, to whom it rightfully belonged. Maine tried to throw off the authority of Massachusetts. Nor was this all. In nearly every State Committees of Public Safety were formed and threatened to usurp the powers of the State Governments; whilst in Massachusetts there was an armed rebellion known in history as Shays's Rebellion. From the impending ruin the Union was saved by the Convention which met in Philadelphia in 1787. Then was framed that Constitution the adoption of which by the several States transformed the dying Confederation into what has proved to be a living and indestructible Union of States. The first Congress under this Constitution met at New York on the 6th of April, 1789, and the new Government was finally put in operation on the 30th of April by the inauguration of the first President, George Washington.

That the Union thus formed and established was "more perfect" than that which had theretofore existed is plain enough; but it was made still more complete by the consummate wisdom, the lofty patriotism, and the unrivaled statesmanship of the men who founded and organized the new Government and administered it during the first decade of its existence. Yet it was a combination of political organizations—rather than a union of peoples; something devised to secure peace at home, to prevent foreign domination, and chiefly to develop and protect commerce and trade; it had no root in the hearts of the people, who had again become New Englanders, New Yorkers, and Virginians, and had ceased to be Americans. It

was a Union as unlike the Union of to-day as the England of Alfred was unlike the England of Victoria.

The strength of any political compact is based, not upon its conditions and stipulations, but upon the affection and respect of those who are governed by it; it is founded upon those complex feelings which we call patriotism.

No such sentiment brought together the Convention of 1787. No such feeling induced the several States to adopt the Constitution which that Convention framed. No such feeling bound together the States which were united under that Constitution.

Yet, under the benign influence of Washington the Union began to win the admiration, the confidence, and the affection of the people. Men began to perceive its beneficent influences, and to feel that it promoted their individual interests and the common good. It had, however, none of that sacred character with which a century has since clothed it. Its dissolution was contemplated without anxiety, and there were many who were open and earnest disunionists.

With the accession of Adams to the Presidency in 1797 parties which had kept silent in the august presence of Washington sprang into conflict—the one under the leadership of the President, the other under that of Jefferson. The enactment of the Alien and Sedition laws by the Federalist majority in Congress enraged and alarmed the Republicans; Virginia and Kentucky at once declared through their Legislatures that those acts were unconstitutional, and they called upon the other States to co-operate with them in “maintaining unimpaired the authorities, rights, and liberties reserved to the States respectively and to the people;” and Virginia followed up these declarations with actual preparation of the means for supporting them with force.

Happily, by a change of administration, carrying with it a change of governmental policy, by the election of Jefferson to the Presidency in 1800, a peaceful revolution was effected,

and all fancied justification for a resort to arms was taken away. There was then a lull for a few years. But when the United States purchased the Territory of Louisiana from France (30th of April, 1803,) the storm burst forth as furiously as ever.

The Federalists, whose strength lay chiefly in the North, opposed with all their power the acquisition of this immense territory. They thought that they saw in it the establishment of the supremacy of the South, and consequent ruin to the trade and commerce and other interests of the North. George Cabot, a distinguished citizen of Massachusetts, who had represented that State in the United States Senate, held it to be sufficient reason for the dissolution of the Union. Timothy Pickering also threw all of his great influence in favor of the peaceable secession of the Northern States from a Union which they could no longer hope to control. On the 24th of December, 1803, writing to a friend, he says :

“ I will not despair. I will rather anticipate a new confederacy, exempt from the corrupt and corrupting influence of the aristocratic democrats of the South. There will be (and our children at farthest will see it) a separation. The white and black population will mark the boundary.”

These were the feelings and opinions of an undoubted patriot—a New England patriot who loved Massachusetts and all New England, a man who had fought for the independence of the States, who had for years held high office in the Federal Government, and had been the confidential adviser of Washington, but who believed that the acquisition of the Territory of Louisiana would give to the South a preponderance in the Union which would be fatal to the prosperity of his own section.

Another New England Senator said : “ Admit this western world into the Union and you destroy at once the weight and importance of the Eastern States and compel them to establish a separate, independent empire.”

The fact that such sentiments were openly and constantly

expressed and did not provoke any indignant dissent shows that they were not only generally entertained, but that "love of the Union" was a very feeble sentiment in the hearts of men—that our nationality was in a strictly rudimental condition, that there was not yet an American people, and that the people of the States were still very loosely bound together.

But, also, at this period of our history the malecontents did not stop at words. They not only expressed their wishes for a dissolution of the Union, but devised formal plans to accomplish that object. As a first step, they undertook to disrupt the Republican party in New York. Aaron Burr was made the candidate of the Federalists, and of his wing of the Republican party, for Governor of New York. But this scheme was thwarted by Alexander Hamilton; Burr was defeated, and, as always happens, the coalitionists were temporarily ruined by the failure of their intrigue. Yet the antagonism between the sections lost nothing of its strength and bitterness, and the strife was soon to be renewed more fiercely than ever. It reached its climax during the closing year of Jefferson's administration, when the maritime States of the North, driven to desperation by the ruinous operation of the embargo, seemed about ready to resist the further execution of that disastrous measure by force of arms. Jefferson gave way. The embargo was raised and the danger averted.

In 1811 ensued a fierce struggle between the sections for the possession of the Federal Government. The point then in controversy was the admission of Louisiana into the Union as a State. In the course of the debates which took place in Congress threats of a dissolution of the Union by the secession of the Northern States were constantly made. We find them calmly and boldly uttered in the following extract from a speech of Josiah Quincy, a man of eminent ability and patriotism :

"If this bill passes it is my deliberate opinion that it is virtually a dissolution of this Union ; that it will free the States from their moral

“obligations, and, as it will be the right of all, so it will be the duty of some, definitely to prepare for a separation, amicably if they can, violently if they must.”

Mr. Quincy was called to order. The Speaker, Mr. Varnum, of Massachusetts, decided that the suggestion of a dissolution of the Union was out of order. From this decision an appeal was taken to the House, and the decision was reversed, showing that in the opinion of a majority of the members of the House the dissolution of the Union was a debatable question.

While these were the feelings and sentiments of the States upon the Atlantic seaboard, similar feelings and sentiments were to be found among the new States of the West. The mysterious expedition of Aaron Burr lacked neither sympathy nor followers in the Mississippi Valley, and the newspapers of Ohio argued strongly in favor of the separation of the Western States from the Union.

At the same time the contempt in which the Government at Washington was held by foreign powers is illustrated by the mischievous schemes of Citizen Genet for the organization in North Carolina and Georgia of an expedition against the Spanish colony of Florida, and the projection of a like movement from Kentucky against New Orleans.

It thus appears that the Union as it existed in 1812 was a mere confederation of sovereign States, loosely bound together by purely selfish interests, by the fancied necessities of trade, by their fears of foreign domination, and by little else. He was still a patriot who loved his own State or section and none other; who was readiest to promote the welfare of his own section at the expense of the others, who loved Massachusetts and Virginia, and distrusted and intrigued against the Union, or denounced it openly and sought its dissolution.

How different such a Union from that of to day—a Union so complete, so firmly bound together, that the greatest rebellion that history records could not dissolve it, could not disrupt it, could not even weaken it ! What has wrought this great

change in the Government of our fathers ? How did the War of 1812 help to do it ?

War was declared on the 18th of June, 1812—a date which marks the transfer of the Federal Government from the generation which achieved our independence and established the Union to a generation which had grown to manhood, not under the crown of England, but under the flag of the republic. The repeated insults heaped by Great Britain upon that flag during the preceding four or five years, the brutal attack of the Leopard upon the Chesapeake, the insolent claim of Great Britain to board our war vessels and search them for deserters, the undisguised contempt of both that country and France for the pusillanimous young republic which had been weakly paying tribute to the piratical Barbary States, at last fired the hearts and aroused the patriotism of this new generation. This outburst of indignant patriotic feeling found fit leaders in two young men—Henry Clay and John Caldwell Calhoun—the one endowed with matchless eloquence and a mastering will, the other with resistless logic and the loftiest character, both Americans, every inch Americans, and filled with the most ardent love of their country and with a fervent devotion to the Union of the States.

With their advent upon the scene of action as the leaders of the war party begins the real history of the American people and the firm and lasting establishment of the American Union. Backed by George Clinton, of New York, and James Monroe, of Virginia, these young Americans forced Mr. Madison, the President, to advise Congress to declare war, and, in spite of the fierce and determined opposition of the Federalists and the Peace Republicans, they carried that measure triumphantly through Congress, and by that act welded the Union indissolubly together.

It was the War of 1812 which thus gave the control of the Federal Government into the hands of Americans, as distinguished from Virginians, and New Englanders, and New

Yorkers, and which drove from public life every man whose fidelity to the Union was not unquestioned and unquestionable. The stigma left by the mysterious Hartford Convention was sufficient for the political ruin of its members, and the words "Blue-light Federalist" became a term of political opprobrium.

The events of the war quickly brought into conspicuous action a host of other young men whose eloquence and wisdom in the council chamber, and brilliant achievements on the high seas and on the battlefield, inflamed the hearts of the people everywhere and roused the whole country to the highest pitch of patriotic enthusiasm. Clay, and Calhoun, and Clinton, and Monroe were no longer distinct from the throng of statesmen and soldiers and captains who stood by their side in the defense of the honor of the Union. The country then passed into the keeping, and remained for a generation under the guardianship, of Clay, Clinton, Calhoun, Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Daniel D. Tompkins, William Henry Harrison, Lawrence, Deatur, Perry, Lewis Cass, Winfield Scott, Andrew Jackson, and their adherents.

The War of 1812 would have contributed more largely to create a nation than any one event in our earlier history had it done nothing more than bring these true patriots before the public eye, and lift them into the high places of Government—men who had awakened by their ardor, and had made imperishable by their achievements, a love of country coextensive with its domain, and thus had shaped the fortunes of this continent.

It did, however, something more. It made the States a nation in interests, in associations, in sentiment—a nation free from the entanglements of European politics, with a Navy strong enough to maintain its neutrality, to protect its foreign commerce, and to defend its rights upon the seas; and with an Army which, though it had passed through shameful disasters, had distinguished itself finally in Scott's brilliant achievements and in the crowning victory of the war at New Orleans. The war taught the people to love the Union, for were not Tippe-

canoe, and Lundy's Lane, and New Orleans, and the victories of our young Navy the common heritage of all? Neither Scott, nor Clay, nor Adams, nor Calhoun, nor Tompkins, nor Clinton sought to confer invidious honors upon the communities, the States, from which they came, but dutifully wreathed their blended offerings in an aureole for the majestic front of young Columbia.

In the blaze of patriotism which was enkindled in the hearts of all disunionism and secessionism and sectionalism were utterly consumed, and for years both North and South forgot their rivalries and antagonisms, their selfish interests, and their ignorant prejudices. The cardinal principles of the Federal party—the preservation and perpetuity of the Federal Government—had been quietly accepted and adopted by the Republicans, while the Republican principle of limiting the powers and duties of the Federal Government had been adopted by the Federalists when the Federal Government had fallen into Republican hands. The whole people composed one party whose principles were neither those of the original Federal nor those of the original Republican party, but a combination of both, and the country rejoiced in that “era of good feeling” which makes the administration of James Monroe memorable in our annals.

Thus, while we regard the change wrought by the war in the sentiments and affections of the people—the birth of patriotic devotion to the Union—as an important result of the war, there were other results hardly less important.

To the States then, as now, was largely committed the protection of the life and liberty and property of the citizen. It had been hoped by the Republicans and feared by the Federalists that the several States would continue to be the fountains of honor and profit, and that the General Government, having comparatively little patronage, and dealing only with the less important interests of the people, would never attract to its service its abler and more ambitious citizens, or win the affection of the people from their local organizations.

But the war multiplied an hundred-fold the powers and opportunities of the National Government and made it the very source of honor, emolument, and distinction. Its strength, aside from its indirect influences, never seemed great or potential until it was developed by the war. To it now the patriotic and the nobly ambitious, as well as those greedy for power and pelf, looked for the gratification of their desires. Every officer in the Army, every officer in the Navy, every soldier and sailor, fought its battles and drew its pay; every contractor courted its favor and grew rich upon its bounty, and every man who administered the Government, from the President down to the humblest clerk, every Senator, every Representative, every Minister to a foreign court—all these thought, and worked, and fought for the Union, and so learned to love it and to make it worthy of the love of their countrymen, respected abroad and revered at home.

Every department of the Federal Government was strengthened by the war; not only the executive and legislative departments, but the judicial as well. The vast increase in the business of the Federal courts, growing out of the decision of the admiralty cases brought into them by the fortunes of war, and which during the next decade occupied so great a space in their reports, drew the attention of the country to the learning, the ability, and the integrity of the eminent judges who presided over them and made them thenceforth the chosen forum for most of the important cases over which they had concurrent jurisdiction with the State courts. And from that time to this they have been steadily and rapidly widening their jurisdiction and increasing their power, until now, their importance which before the War of 1812 was insignificant, equals, and perhaps exceeds, that of the State tribunals. And this very fact strengthens the Federal judiciary still more by attracting to its bench the ablest, the most learned, and the purest men in the land, thereby endowing it with a moral force equal to its actual power over the persons and property of fifty millions

of people—a power which is molding the laws and shaping the institutions and transforming the Government, not only of our generation, but for generations to come.

The legislative department felt the invigorating influence of the war as sensibly, and perhaps more sensibly, than the judicial. The duties of Congress became all-important, and every man of ability who longed to serve his country, or to win for himself a name, saw that it was in the councils of the Union that he must seek for the attainment of his purpose, and not in the provincial Legislature of New York or Virginia, of Massachusetts or of Georgia. Hence Washington became the centre of the Union, and thither turned the eyes and hearts of American politicians and statesmen. Every subject of legislation which had before attracted its attention occupied it in a still greater degree now, and new measures of transcendent importance began to give to its deliberations an interest which they had never before possessed, and which made it the cynosure of every eye. How trivial seemed the commonplace deliberations of the State Legislatures, with their petty interests, compared with the deliberations of a Congress which had in its hands the issues of peace and war, which was raising and equipping armies and navies, and controlling the destinies of a continent; which was levying taxes to carry on a great military contest; which was disbursing tens of millions of dollars; which next had to consider the terms of peace; and which, after the conclusion of hostilities, had before it those vital questions of finance which a costly war had left for solution—treaties with powerful Indian tribes; the settlement of the foundations of society in the boundless West, legislation made necessary by the victories of Harrison, and Jackson, and Shelby; the beginning of those great works of internal improvement to which the West owes its unparalleled growth in population and in wealth—and other subjects of equal weight! All this gave to the legislative department of the Government a power and an influence utterly unknown before the war, an importance

which was greatly increased by the character of the men whom these vital matters brought into its councils. The dignity, the power, the supremacy, thus conferred upon Congress have never been lost, but have grown with the growth of the country and with the magnitude of the interests confided to Congressional discretion.

But it was the executive department which received the greatest accession of power through the war. Then for the first time the President seemed to be clothed with a new quality which almost equaled the dictatorial powers of the Roman Consuls when the Senate decreed that they should see that no detriment came to the republic.

The patronage of the President was enormously increased not only by the multiplication of the Army and Navy lists, and by the immense increase of the civil list, but also by the firm grasp he was enabled to take of the purse and the sword—not the light purse which the liberty-loving Jefferson had so sedulously kept empty, nor the harmless sword which that hater of tyrants was beating into a pruning-hook, but a purse filled with the proceeds of heavy taxes and a high tariff, and the two-edged sword of the Army and Navy.

The Treasury became a resistless power through the multitude of persons who were employed in the collection and disbursement of the revenues which the war made necessary, and in the management of the finances of a nation which was organizing, and supplying, and equipping an Army, building and supporting a Navy, and waging war on land and on sea against Great Britain, Canada, and the savage Indians of the South and West.

The Army, which was at the outset of the war, insignificant in numbers, poorly armed, and badly officered, was largely increased, and, before the war ended, had become well-disciplined soldiers, and, under the leadership of Scott and of Jackson, was able to cope successfully with the veterans of Great Britain. It added incalculably to the power of the President,

who was its Commander-in-Chief, who commissioned its officers, who directed its movements, and wielded its strength.

The Navy contributed still more to the power of the President and to the prestige of the Union. It can hardly be said to have existed before the War of 1812. It is true that a Navy Department had been organized in 1792, and our seamen had won glory in the war with Tripoli, but the President, Mr. Jefferson, wisely regarding it as one of the strongest elements of national power, and a constant danger to the States, began to break it up as soon as the Tripolitan War was concluded, and had almost crushed it out of existence before his term of office expired. The War of 1812 called it into being again, created it anew, and whitened the ocean with its sails. Decatur, Lawrence, Perry and their dashing comrades by the splendor of their achievements effaced the shame which was brought upon the Union by its armies during the first year of the war. The Navy became the pride and the glory of the people, and it was pre-eminently the Navy of the Union. The Army, whose defeats and disgraces were so keenly felt, was composed largely of the Militia of the several States, but the Navy belonged to no State—it was the creature of the Union. Whatever shame there was might be chargeable to the States, while the glory belonged to the Union.

The Navy is pre-eminently loyal to the Union, its officers are unflinching true to their flag. Army officers seldom lose interest in the fortunes of their States because they are never wholly separated from them, but the officers and men of the Navy, living under the flag, bearing it over every sea, and into every foreign port, isolated from the communities in which they were born and reared, forget their States in their devotion to the flag of the Union, and cease to be anything but Americans. They, therefore, are peculiarly obedient to the will and the wishes of the President, who is at once their Commander-in-Chief and the impersonation of their country. It is this

which makes the Navy more dangerous to the liberties of the republic than is the Army, and at the same time a surer defense to the extent of its ability.

In a more natural way the war did much to consolidate the Union and to bind it fast together. The experience of the time had shown the absolute necessity for making military roads through every part of the country, and to this fact is due the inauguration of the system of internal improvements—the making of roads, plain dirt roads at first, then macadamized pikes, then the complex net-work of railroads, which last saved the Union in the war of secession, and now binds every part of the country to the other by the lasting ties of interest, neighborhood, and constant intercourse.

To the War of 1812 we also owe the conversion of New England into a manufacturing, Union-loving community. Prior to the war many of its people, who were then chiefly engaged in shipping and commerce, felt that the Federal Government, which was controlled by the agricultural States of the South, was a curse rather than a blessing to them, and many of the purest and most patriotic statesmen of that section felt that its highest interest would be subserved by its withdrawal from the Union. The war increased the demand for home products and cut off foreign imports and competition, and though the stimulus to manufacturing industry was fitful and uncertain, the enterprises then established exist to this day. The capital and energies which had been employed in shipping and commerce were set free and diverted to manufactures. Protected by the absolutely prohibitory tariff that the war established, from that hour to this New Englanders have felt the blessings of the Union, and have been among its most eminent and bravest defenders.

But, after all, the most important result of the war was the acquisition of the exclusive right to the navigation of the Mississippi River. It is not too much to say that the Union exists to-day because the people of the West would not con-

sent that the control of the traffic of the greatest river of the continent and the world should be divided with any other power, whether European or American. It is the strongest of all the material bonds which hold the States together in an indissoluble Union. No one who understands clearly the forces which prevented the dissolution of the Union in 1861 will hesitate to say that of all those forces the Mississippi River was the most powerful. At the time of the declaration of the war in 1812 Great Britain was entitled to the free navigation of the Mississippi River under the treaties of 1763, 1783, 1794. The War of '12 consumed the treaties, and the American Commissioners who negotiated the treaty of Ghent were urged by the representatives of the Crown, month after month, to concede the continuance of the privilege to Great Britain in return for fishing privileges to be granted to the United States. To this entreaty Henry Clay would never listen. Sustained by the President, the concession was firmly refused, and the Union became entitled to the exclusive navigation of the great river. According to Prof. Guyot the area drained by it and its tributaries is 1,244,000 square miles. Never before in the world's history had commerce upon so grand a scale, and through regions so vast, differing widely in soil, climate and condition, been freed from restriction. Before the purchase of Louisiana the partial control of this great highway by France and Spain successively had occasioned serious and alarming discontent among the people of the West, and was the stimulating influence that gave life and vigor to the schemes of Aaron Burr and the machinations of Genet. When Great Britain, in 1814, sent the brother-in-law of Wellington, Sir Edward Pakenham, and his Peninsular veterans to capture New Orleans, the inspiring motive was to seize and hold the mouth of the Mississippi, and thereby deal a deadly blow at the growth and power of the country. The victory of the 8th of January, 1815, thwarted this far-reaching scheme, and confirmed to the Union the most productive region of the globe.

The Congress of the Confederate States also early understood the value and importance of the great river and the difficult problem its commerce presented, and among the earliest and wisest enactments of that body was a law by which the free navigation of the stream was dedicated to all Americans.

This policy was intended to remove one cause of assured hostility, and placate the inhabitants of the North Western States. These fertile regions had been settled by men from the older States of the Union. They left their former State love behind them in the homes of their youth. The time had been too short to awaken a fresh pride in the young commonwealths of their new residence, and on the banks of the monarch stream they became the hardy sons of the Union and its most stalwart defenders. Pouring along its course from Itasea to the Gulf a tide of valor as resistless as its own waters, they cleaved in twain the dominion of the Confederate States, and gave to the Union the first and most important victories in the war for its preservation.

All those centralizing and nationalizing forces are still at work, giving to the General Government an expansion of power which the extending area of the country and its growing population and wealth and diversified interests make necessary for the common good. Great as these forces are, they would not have sufficed to hold the Union together if it had not become enshrined in the hearts of the people by the blessings it has conferred upon all classes and conditions of men. The War of 1812 made it a reality and not a mere political expression. What was there in its history prior to that time to excite the imaginations, to arouse the pride, to stir the hearts, and to win the affections of its people? No genuinely patriotic feeling could thrive in the midst of the controversies which agitated the country during the administrations of Adams and Jefferson; it could not find kindly soil or a friendly atmosphere amid the stormy passions

of that period which brought forth the Alien and Sedition laws, the resolutions of '98 and '99, the quarrels of Hamilton and Burr, and Burr's conspiracy and trial, or in the antagonisms which then began to array section against section.

But the war changed all this. The flag of the Union was no longer an unmeaning thing. It became lustrous with the victories of Scott, and Jackson, and Harrison, of Decatur and Perry. It became a symbol of a country able and willing to protect its citizens ; a country honored abroad and worthy to be loved at home.

In its stipulations and agreements, as has been said, the Union as it existed before the war of 1812 remains substantially unchanged ; but as the Rhine upon which Cæsar looked is unlike the Rhine of the nineteenth century, clad with those varied charms with which history and romance and legend and story have invested its people and its scenery, so is transfigured the great republic of the West, its glories "thick inlaid," its resplendent history filled with deeds of greatness, its banner fretted with innumerable stars, and its indestructibility assured forever against "domestic malice or foreign levy."

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